

LETTER FROM WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

The following letter from William Lloyd Garrison was read by the toast-master:—

ROXBURY, August 3, 1875.

P. R. Guiney, esq.:—

Dear Sir,—I am gratified to receive through you from the committee of arrangements an invitation to participate in the O'Connell centennial banquet to be given in this city on the evening of the 5th instant, for, though not an Irishman by birth, no son of Erin holds in higher appreciation than I do the memory and services of the great Irish liberator. While circumstances will prevent my attendance, I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to recognize him afresh as among the foremost champions of liberty and equal rights in any land or age. Certainly, the millions of Irishmen on their native soil and the millions of them in this and other lands have special reasons for remembering him with pride and gratitude, admiration and affection, as the ablest, most eloquent and most potential advocate of "Justice for Ireland" against centuries of wrong and oppression.

If he did not live to see the accomplishment of all that he aimed to secure, it was not owing to any lack on his part of vigilance, zeal, courage, energy or devotion; for, animated by the most patriotic incentives and sustained by the noblest principles, the trumpet tones of his voice were ceaselessly heard demanding a full and prompt redress of grievances no longer tamely to be borne. Yet he was incomparably more than a technical geographical Irishman. In one of his many inspirational speeches he nobly said: "I have no superfluous tears to shed for Ireland, and shall show my love of my country by continuing my exertions to obtain for her justice and good government; but I feel that I have something Irish at my heart, which makes me sympathize with all those who are suffering under oppression, and forces me to give to universal man the benefit of the exertions which are the consequence."

Hence, O'Connell was not only the champion of Catholic emancipation and repeal, but the sympathizer with the down-trodden and oppressed in every land, especially with those whose fate was the most deplorable, because they were registered with goods and chattels, cattle and swine. "Man cannot have property in man," he exclaimed; "slavery is a nuisance to be put down, not to be compromised with; and to be assailed without cessation and without mercy by every blow that can be levelled at the monster."

As early as 1825—half a century ago—he presented himself on an anti-slavery platform as the advocate of unconditional emancipation; and joining hands with Wilberforce and Clarkson, Buxton and Brougham, and their associates, he did his full share in effecting the liberation of eight hundred thousand bondmen under the British crown.

On my first visit to England in 1833, he honored me with his personal friendship, warmly espoused the object of my mission, and expressed in vehement terms his astonishment, sorrow and indignation that such a nefarious system as chattel slavery should be tolerated in a land proud of its Declaration of Independence and boastful of its free institutions.

As long as he lived he did not fail to rebuke us in scathing language for our shocking inconsistency as a republic; at the same time saying "We honor all that is really good in America, and would have it all on our side in this glorious struggle. Let us unite and persevere, and by the blessing of God and the aid of good men Freedom will, ere long, wave her triumphant banner over emancipated America, and we shall unite with the whole world to rejoice in the result."

It is for "emancipated America" to honor the memory of him whose constant desire was for her purification and ever increasing prosperity. It is for "the whole world" to accord a conspicuous place to his statue in the Pantheon of its noblest champions of freedom and humanity.

Yours for liberty for each, for all and for ever,
WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

Ms. A. 1.1 v. 8, p. 75B